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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002663

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2015

TAGS: PREL AM TU

SUBJECT: DAS KENNEDY URGES TURKEY TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITY FOR DIALOGUE WITH ARMENIA

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During her May 2-3 visit to Turkey, DAS Kennedy urged Turkish MFA officials, National Security Council Secretary General Alpogan, and parliamentarians to seize the opportunity for dialogue presented by the exchange of letters between PM Erdogan and President Kocharian. MFA Caucasus/Central Asia DG Akinci characterized Kocharian's letter as non-responsive and repeated the standard MFA position that Armenia had to first make concessions on occupied Azeri territory and explicitly recognize the Kars Treaty borders between Turkey and Armenia. Alpogan, and to some extent MFA U/S Tuygan, appeared open to a more constructive response. Alpogan suggested that Kocharian's intergovernmental dialogue proposal could encompass simultaneous discussions of history, diplomatic relations and border questions. End Summary.

DAS Kennedy: Seize the Opportunity

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¶2. (U) With her official interlocutors, as well as during a roundtable with parliamentarians and a press conference, DAS Kennedy urged Turkey to use the letter exchange between PM Erdogan and President Kocharian as an opportunity to resume bilateral dialogue. She noted that President Bush's April 24 statement had favorably mentioned the PM's proposal for a joint historical study. She pointed out that the current bilateral impasse and various recent international pronouncements on Armenian genocide have put Turkey on the defensive.

MFA DG Akinci: Kocharian Letter Not Responsive

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¶3. (C) Akinci speculated that FM Oskanian was the real author of President Kocharian's April 25 reply to PM Erdogan's letter. Akinci said the April 25 letter "does not respond to our demands." Akinci claimed the GOAM is behind genocide resolutions in countries like Poland and Slovakia. He defended Ottoman treatment of Armenians in 1915 and gave DAS Kennedy a dossier containing the texts of the Erdogan and Kocharian letters, and related press stories. (Note: The press stories all suggested Erdogan's interest in pursuing rapprochement with Armenia. The dossier suggested either that 1) the MFA itself relied on press reporting to divine Erdogan's intentions or 2) deliberately wanted to underline Erdogan's positive inclinations toward Armenia. End Note)

¶4. (C) Akinci said the GOAM has never directly told the GOT that it recognizes the Kars Treaty borders. Kennedy noted the U.S. has raised this several times with the Armenians and they acknowledged the current borders. Most recently, the new Armenian Ambassador in Washington had noted to her a public statement in which FM Oskanian had publicly referred to the borders defined by the 1921 Kars Treaty. Caucasus Department Head Adali said that during eight rounds of negotiations, his Armenian counterparts said they recognize the Turkish border, but said they cannot explicitly accept the Kars Treaty because they do not want to compromise their claims in other territorial disputes.

¶5. (C) Akinci emphasized measures Turkey has taken to ease bilateral relations and scoffed at the notion that Turkey is "blockading" Armenia. He argued that 40,000 Armenians are working illegally in Turkey, there is open bilateral trade via Georgia, and there are five weekly charter flights between the two countries. "Perhaps these measures would be appreciated more if they were reversed; we could always deport them" he added.

¶6. (C) Kennedy told Akinci the USG role is not to take sides on genocide claims and counterclaims, but to encourage bilateral rapprochement. Noting recent genocide resolutions in Poland, she told Akinci the GOT should find a way to get out ahead on relations with Armenia, otherwise it will be constantly on the defensive. The USG is pleased at the GOT's statement that it is positively evaluating Kocharian letter. Kennedy noted the Armenian proposal for an intergovernmental commission and strongly suggested the GOT find a way to build on it. She urged that Turkey be as positive as possible in its reply to

Kocharian.

¶7. (C) Akinci twice recalled that the Turkish/Armenian border had been closed due to Armenian attacks on Azerbaijan and added that "they must give us a reason" to re-open it. Azerbaijan is "as Turkish as Turkey, and it is impossible to separate these issues. If they make one gesture on this, we will respond," he said, "but they have not made one gesture." Kennedy replied that this will come through successful OSCE negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan; Turkey should not hold its dialogue with Armenia hostage to the Armenia/Azerbaijan dispute. She again urged Akinci to think seriously about how to respond to the Kocharian letter. Akinci said the GOT has not rejected the letter, but Armenia needs to make a gesture on occupied Azeri territory. Kennedy noted that the N-K Minsk negotiations were tackling this difficult set of issues and were at the best stage since the Key West process. Ambassador Mann is deeply involved in this effort and will be glad to brief Turkey on progress.

More Positive Approach by NSC's Alpogan, MFA U/S Tuygan

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¶8. (C) In contrast to Akinci, Alpogan appeared to understand and accept the opportunity the exchange of letters presents. Alpogan told Kennedy he would recommend accepting Kocharian's proposal for an intergovernmental dialogue, perhaps with separate subcommittees dealing with history, bilateral relations and border issues. Alpogan expressed optimism that Turkey could work more easily with the GOAM than with the Armenian diaspora. Kennedy urged him to pursue this course and confirmed GOAM's strong interest in moving ahead with Turkey rather than having its national security subordinated to the varying diaspora agenda. (Note: New U.S. Armenian Ambassador to the U.S. called on Kennedy prior to her visit to Ankara to underscore this point. If Armenia could secure a diplomatic breakthrough with Turkey it would shelve its genocide campaign, he claimed.)

¶9. (C) MFA U/S Tuygan told Kennedy it was important to prevent an Armenian genocide resolution in the U.S. Congress. Kennedy replied that the U.S. Administration opposes any such resolution as unhelpful to the ability of the two sides to focus on rapprochement now, not on what happened in the past. She urged Tuygan to seize the opportunity the letter exchange presents and focus on bilateral dialogue. She noted that rapprochement would also be a positive in Turkey's relations with the EU. Tuygan acknowledged the point and said Turkey's EU relations should not be clouded by extraneous issues like this.

¶10. (C) Comment: Alpogan's more positive and bold vision on this issue (as well as Cyprus - septel) underscore the value of a high-level reception in Washington when he visits in June. End Comment.

¶11. (U) DAS Kennedy cleared this cable.  
EDELMAN